

# Language integration of forced and economic migrants in Croatia

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This paper presents an overview of the language integration of new migrants (refugees and asylum seekers, additionally foreign workers) in Croatia. Special emphasis is placed on the current practice and future needs for teaching and testing Croatian as L2 regarding forced migration (refugees, asylum seekers and asylees) and the increasing economic migration, which Croatia is currently experiencing. The roles of state and educational institutions, as well as of the policy and legal framework of (language) integration of vulnerable groups of learners is described.

**Keywords:** Croatian as L2, forced and economic migration, language integration

## 1 Immigrants in the Republic of Croatia

Until recently, Croatia was typically viewed as an emigrant country, both in the literature and everyday discourse. However, citizens of former Yugoslav, non-EU member countries, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, have been consistently immigrating to Croatia, whether for long-term stays or temporary work purposes. These migrants easily integrate into Croatian society due to the lack of

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linguistic or significant cultural barriers.<sup>1</sup> Thus, since language integration posed minimal challenges for the predominant immigrant population, the state likely did not prioritize systematic language integration efforts for immigrants.

Apart from immigrants from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia, and other citizens of former Yugoslav countries, Croatia has also attracted immigrants from other nations and more distant linguistic and cultural backgrounds, for various reasons. These include marriage, remigration (descendants of earlier Croatian emigrants returning), employment in international companies, starting a business, people with research and teaching positions, and those studying abroad. Similar to in other host countries, some of these individuals find language courses on their own, and for some formal language learning is ensured by the very fact that they came to Croatia with the support of an institution. For example, language classes for the descendants of Croatian emigrants are offered by those institutions which take care of Croats living abroad, while for students, researchers, scientists, and so on they are provided by some academic institutions.

However, in the context of the broader contemporary migrations that have taken place over the past decade, Croatia has seen an increasing number of migrants from two new groups: refugees<sup>2</sup> from conflict areas (such as Syria, Turkey, Iraq, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Pakistan, Egypt, Morocco, Congo, DR of Congo, Somalia, and since 2022, Ukraine and the Russian Federation) and foreign workers arriving through employment agencies (e.g. from Nepal, India, Bangladesh, and the Philippines). In recent years, the Croatian economy has faced a shortage of labour in sectors such as construction, tourism and hospitality, industrial work, transportation, and retail. This led to the cancellation of the quota system for foreign worker employment and a noticeable increase in foreign workers filling unskilled positions.<sup>3</sup> In the following

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1 Although some research shows that even migrants from these countries encounter certain challenges, specifically due to the fact that their language is so close to Croatian, but not “real Croatian” (more in Grgić, 2018).

2 Up until 31 March 2024, 6,043 people had sought international protection in Croatia, with 972 having been granted asylum, and 144 subsidiary protections (<https://mup.gov.hr/pristup-informacijama-16/statistika-228/statistika-trazitelji-medjunarodne-zastite/283234>).

3 Although workers from Bosnia and Herzegovina and Serbia are still the predominant group, by 31st of May 2024, Croatia had issued 15,922 work and residence permits for citizens of

text, the term foreign workers will be used to refer to those coming to Croatia through employment agencies for unskilled jobs.

From the perspective of integration, these two groups differ in the following characteristics:

- 1) State institutions and, to a large extent, NGOs and the civil sector, primarily address the basic existential needs of refugees. Even though the existential needs of foreign workers are somewhat different, current practice shows that employers most often find accommodation for foreign workers (but do not finance it), although the law does not oblige them to do so.
- 2) Refugee status is governed by the *International and Temporary Protection Act* (Official Gazette, No. 70/15, 127/17; 2015, 2018.). Persons in need of international protection fall into several categories: applicants for international protection, asylees, foreigners under subsidiary protection, and foreigners under temporary protection. Regardless of category, they all have the right to elementary and high school education. The status of foreign workers is regulated by the *Aliens Act* (Official Gazette, No. 133/20, 114/22, 151/22), which remains in effect. A draft proposal for amendments to this Act was introduced in early 2024 but has not yet been adopted.
- 3) Among the refugees, there is a significant number of families with children and also unaccompanied minors, which, in addition to taking care of their accommodation, raises the issue of including children and minors in the educational system. On the other hand, foreign workers don't need the assistance of this kind. They come to Croatia based on the work permissions system, mostly alone, without children and the need for further education.
- 4) When it comes to persons under international protection, asylees are required to attend courses in the Croatian language, history, and culture as part of their integration into Croatian society (Official Gazette, No. 70/15, 127/17, articles 64 (4), 74 (1)). These courses

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Nepal, 8,504 for citizens of India, 6,323 for citizens of the Philippines, and 5,338 for citizens of Bangladesh. In 2023, citizens of these countries received the following number of work and residence permits: Nepal 23,493, India 15,627, the Philippines 10,999, Bangladesh 8,749 (<https://mup.gov.hr/gradjani-281562/moji-dokumenti-281563/stranci-333/statistika-169019/169019>).

are financed by the state budget (Article 74 (3)) and organized by the Ministry responsible for education. Asylees and foreigners under subsidiary protection are required to cover the fee of the course if they fail to fulfil this requirement (Article 74 (2)). The Act does not explicitly state whether the users are also required to pass the exam. Unfortunately, since there is no published data on the implementation of the programme so far, for example on the number of participants who enrolled and completed the language course, the composition of the participants' groups, etc., we cannot provide any information about the successful or systematic implementation of this programme.

- 5) The current law does not require foreign workers to know or learn Croatian unless they choose to apply for long-term residency in the Republic of Croatia. In such cases, they are required to take the Croatian language and Latin script examination, which is governed by the *Ordinance on the Regulation of Croatian Language and Latin Script Examination for Long-Term Residence* (hereinafter *Ordinance*) (Official Gazette, No. 100/21), which mandates proficiency at the B1 level according to the CEFR.

## 2 Croatian language assessment

The above-mentioned Croatian language and Latin script examination for the regulation of foreign citizens' long-term stay contains prescribed parts and the method of their implementation and evaluation (*Ordinance*, Articles 4 (3, 4, 5, 6) and Article 5 (1)). It is prescribed that the exam consists of five parts, which correspond to the language skills of listening and reading comprehension, oral and written production, with a particular skill of mastering grammatical structures. The exam therefore consists of listening and reading comprehension, knowledge of grammatical structures, written production – parts that are tested in writing – and oral communication, which is taken orally. Each part of the exam is evaluated with a grade of “satisfactory” or “failed”. For the assessment of listening and reading comprehension, and knowledge of grammatical structures, a score of at least 60% must be obtained for each of these. The applicant is considered to

have passed the exam if the criteria for each part of the exam have been satisfied. The *Ordinance* also provides a descriptor for each of the language skills. Regarding the comprehension of listening texts, the applicant is expected to be able to understand the main messages of radio and television programmes on current events or topics if they are expressed slowly and clearly; in terms of understanding written texts, the applicant is expected to be able to understand texts on familiar topics written in adapted and simple language as well as descriptions of events, things and situations. It is expected that in speech interaction and production, the applicants can manage in most everyday situations and spontaneously talk about familiar topics such as family, work, education, leisure, society, money, food, drink, and housing, as well as to be able to describe in simple terms their plans, experiences, and events, and to summarize a story, book or film. In written production, the applicants must show that they can write a simple but cohesive text on a familiar topic, a personal letter describing their own experiences and impressions, a resume and a description of a picture. The knowledge of language structures is assessed through the practical use of the language, without considering theoretical knowledge (examining basic knowledge of the morphology of nouns, pronouns, adjectives and verbs, use of cases, use of the present, perfect, future and imperative, use of prepositions). The descriptor is modelled after the descriptor for level B1 in CEFR (Council of Europe, 2001) and the Descriptive Framework of reference level B1 for the Croatian language (Gulešić Machata et al., 2013).

The exam can be taken at the following institutions: the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb; Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Rijeka; Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, J.J. Strossmayer University of Osijek; Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zadar; and Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, J. Dobrila University in Pula.<sup>4</sup> At all these institutions there are departments/centres for learning Croatian as L2, with Croaticum – Centre for Croatian as a Second and Foreign Language (Department of Croatian Studies, Faculty of Humanities and Social

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4 <https://mup.gov.hr/stranci-281595/ispit-iz-poznavanja-hrvatskog-jezika-i-latinicnog-pisma/283364>

Sciences of the University of Zagreb) (hereinafter *Croaticum*) as the oldest and the biggest among them. For all of them language testing for different purposes is only one of their activities, and none is specialized nor has a special department for such testing. However, since 2014 the National Centre for External Evaluation of Education (hereinafter: the *Centre*)<sup>5</sup> has conducted the Croatian language exam for B2 level, for the purpose of studying at Croatian universities. As a specialized testing centre, it prepares exams by consulting all the relevant experts (i.e. psycholinguists, psychometricians, and statisticians). Additionally, for preparation of Croatian L2 exams it also engages professionals in teaching and researching Croatian as L2. It is common practice that *Croaticum*'s teachers and researchers participate as team members in the preparation of the Croatian L2 exam in the *Centre*.

However, on the website of the Ministry of Science, Education and Youth<sup>6</sup> it is possible to find a list of 76 accredited education institutions that organize these exams,<sup>7</sup> although there is some inconsistency in this data, as it includes both faculties and the universities they are part of, thus counting them twice. Searching through the websites of the institutions where the exam can be taken, it is noticed that there is no standard fee for the exam and not all of these institutions provide an overview of the test with a sample exam, or at least they are not available online. Sample exams are available only on the website of *Croaticum* and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Pula.<sup>8</sup> The websites of the other institutions only describe the different sections of the exam and the administration procedures prescribed by the *Ordinance*. In addition to showing that each institution decides for itself with regard to certain aspects of conducting exams (different prices,

5 It is a national institution that conducts external evaluations in preschools, primary schools, and secondary schools.

6 <https://mzom.gov.hr/istaknute-teme/odgoj-i-obrazovanje/obrazovanje-odraslih/popis-ustanova-koje-provide-ispit-iz-znanja-hrvatskoga-jezika-i-latinicnog-pisma-za-strance/4827>

7 In Article 154 (1) of the Aliens Act (Official Gazette, No. 133/20), it is said that the Croatian language and Latin script exam may be conducted by universities or university components that run programmes and testing in the Croatian language, and high school institutions, the National Centre for External Evaluation of Education and institutions for adult education if they have permission to conduct exams in the Croatian language and the Latin script from the Ministry responsible for education. According to the available information, there are no other criteria for gaining permission to conduct the exam.

8 [https://ffpu.unipu.hr/ffpu/kroatistika/hrvatski\\_za\\_strance/provjera\\_znanja\\_hrvatskoga\\_jezika\\_kao\\_inoga](https://ffpu.unipu.hr/ffpu/kroatistika/hrvatski_za_strance/provjera_znanja_hrvatskoga_jezika_kao_inoga)

(un)availability of exam samples etc.), it also testifies to the fact that there are no standardized, prescribed or at least uniform exams, which is an indication that the conditions for taking exams are not the same for everyone, because they depend on where they are taken.

Even though there was a paper published back in 2008 by two well-known experts in the field of Croatian as L2 about the “linguistic and sociolinguistic premises which should be fulfilled in order to create, standardize and professionally perform exams of Croatian language on an official level” (Udier and Jelaska, 2008, p. 254), which included “training experts for testing, researching and describing Croatian as L2, designing exams using modern methods and consistency in its conduction” (2008, p. 251), in the *Ordinance* these premises are only visible in the descriptors for the parts of the test that rely on the descriptive framework for the B1 reference level for Croatian (Grgić et al., 2013). No guidelines about the qualifications and competences of the examiners were included, although the authors (Udier and Jelaska, 2008), elaborated those regarding the professional context of the examination. They also pointed out the importance of establishing a special examination department within the institution in which Croatian is taught as L2 and an umbrella organization that would take care of preparing and implementing the examination, ensuring its high quality. Unfortunately, more than 15 years later it remains rare to find such a well-described procedure for the examination.

### **3 Language empowerment of the immigrants**

Language competence is a key to successful integration in a new country, especially in cases of long-term settlement (Council of Europe / Language Policy Unit (Strasbourg) – Project LIAM). As noted earlier, the issue of language integration emerged in Croatia with the arrival of growing numbers of refugees from conflict zones. More recently, the importance of language learning for foreign workers has also gained prominence. For example, interviews that Butković et al. (2022) conducted with representatives of the Croatian Employment Service and the Ministry of the Interior – important institutions in the process of issuing work permits for citizens of third countries – show an awareness

about the lack of a (systematic) migration strategy (Butković et al., 2022, p. 45). Namely, although the previous migration policy ceased to be valid in 2015, a new migration policy has not been adopted yet (ibid: 22), which among other problems results in a lack of adequate access to professional training or language learning for foreign workers. Even if such programmes are implemented, they are mostly irregular and are carried out on a project basis. Foreign workers generally cannot afford the language courses offered in foreign language schools, and employers usually do not offer to subsidize this or offer their own classes (ibid: 46).

The media also follow this topic,<sup>9</sup> emphasizing language issues related to occupational safety (especially in industries where workers must undergo safety training, such as construction and processing) and work performance (particularly in hospitality and tourism), which was stressed by the Croatian Employers' Association.<sup>10</sup>

Non-governmental organizations have also highlighted the difficulties that foreign workers, refugees, and all other foreigners in Croatia face with regard to language integration. A good example is the conference *Croatian in Croatia*.<sup>11</sup> The organizer – the Centre for Peace Studies (CMS) – gathered stakeholders from different departments and institutions dealing with foreigners in Croatia. The goal was to start a dialogue about overcoming the language barrier in Croatian society through more accessible language courses and translators, considering the increasing number of people who do not use the Croatian language at home and/or who do not understand the Croatian language enough to communicate.

When it comes to the language integration of refugees, in accordance with the *Law on Asylum* (2007, 2013) the Ministry of Education issued the *Programme for Learning Croatian Language, History, and*

9 <https://www.index.hr/vijesti/clanak/u-hrvatskoj-je-sve-vise-radnika-iz-azije-kako-ih-ukljuciti-u-drustvo/2421213.aspx>; <https://www.otvoreno.hr/gospodarstvo/u-hrvatskoj-je-sve-vise-stranik-radnika-krajnje-je-vrijeme-za-njihovu-integraciju/474425>

10 Jasminka Martinović, director of branch associations in the Croatian Association of Employers, <https://vijesti.hrt.hr/hrvatska/novi-zakon-o-stranim-radnicima-uvodi-ucenje-jezika-11373891>

11 The conference was held in June 2024 as a part of the ASAP project (Accessing services, Sharing Approaches and Practices), financed by the EU Fund for Asylum, Migration and Integration, and co-financed by the Office for NGOs of the Government of the Republic of Croatia.



*Culture for Asylees and Foreigners Under Subsidiary Protection for the Purpose of Integration into Croatian Society* (2014). This aims to enable students to achieve A1 proficiency level according to the CEFR upon course completion, with a recommended minimum of 280 hours of instruction. Furthermore, the programme includes eight units with general objectives and outcomes for each of the four language skills, as well as cultural content. Guidelines for language proficiency assessment are also prescribed (Đurđević and Podboj, 2016; Ocvirk et al., 2019).

However, despite being well-designed, Cvitanušić (2022, p. 141) claims that the *Programme* has not been implemented well for several reasons, with the eligibility criteria for funding allocation, such as from the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF) which funds the Ministry of Education's project *Integration of Asylees and Foreigners under Subsidiary Protection into Croatian Society, Education, and Preparation for Labour Market Inclusion*, being highlighted. More specifically, it appears that the main criteria are not the expertise and experience of teachers who should teach these vulnerable<sup>12</sup> groups of learners, while at the same time adherence to all principles of L2 teaching, including the institution's available capacity, expected quality and organization of instruction, and the quality and suitability of teaching materials, are also neglected. Another problem is the lack of official data on the success of the implementation of and attendance at these courses. Đurđević and Podboj (2016) have pointed out that due to the irregular implementation of such courses, it is mainly volunteers and civil society organizations which take on the task of organizing them. According to Cvitanušić (2022, p. 141), organizations that stand out in their persistence, enthusiasm, and success in teaching Croatian as L2 for refugees are the Jesuit Refugees Service (JRS), Centre for Peace Studies (CMS), and Are You Syrious (AYS).<sup>13</sup> At one point, some local government units, such as the City of Zagreb, began funding Croatian language courses either through public calls for human rights-promoting

12 This term is present in both recent and older literature (e.g., Kleinmann, 1983; Bobrow, 2011, Kaplan et al., 2015, etc.), and refers to students characterized by stressful and traumatic experiences, possibly including PTSD, which can affect their cognitive and affective abilities.

13 A non-governmental organization established in 2015 as a civil initiative aimed at aiding refugees on the so-called Balkan route, one of the most important and active supports for refugees and asylum seekers in Croatia.

organizations, or through the City of Zagreb's Action Plan for the implementation of the Charter on Integrating Cities.<sup>14</sup>

In 2017, the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb voluntarily initiated two projects dedicated to increasing the language integration of refugees and asylum seekers. One of these projects was a joint organization of the *Course of Croatian Language and Culture for Asylum Seekers and Refugees* (hereinafter: *Course*) by the Faculty and AYS, which started in the 2017/2018 academic year. AYS's role was to select among its beneficiaries those who had refugee status, had not attended similar courses before, could use the Latin script, and had basic communication skills in Croatian. They then took a written and oral exam based on which 15 participants were selected, as they were considered ready to join classes aimed at achieving the B1.1 proficiency level according to the CEFR. The course was taught by final-year students of Croatian studies, who wanted to gain professional experience through volunteer work with this group of vulnerable language learners. They were prepared for teaching Croatian as L2 through several stages by lecturers from *Croaticum*. The course started in the winter semester of the 2018/2019 academic year as one of *Croaticum*'s accredited *Croatian Language and Culture 2.1 and 2.2 (B1.1)* programmes, lasting for 15 weeks and consisting of 75 lessons. At the end of the semester, participants who successfully completed the programme and passed both the written and oral exams, which assessed their competencies in all language skills (listening and reading comprehension, vocabulary and grammar knowledge, and written and oral production) received a certificate for the B1.1 proficiency level, which is the level required for integration into the labour market and long-term residency in the country.<sup>15</sup> From the first generation of participants until the winter semester of the 2022/2023 academic year, when the course was held in this form for the last time, seven groups, or slightly more than 100 participants, participated in the programme. Approximately half of the participants were awarded the certificate for the B1.1 proficiency level, which indicates that they obtained a sufficient number of points in

14 <https://www.zagreb.hr/UserDocsImages/ljudska%20prava/web/Akcijiski%20plan%20GZ%20za%20provedbu%20Povelje%20Integriraju%C4%87ih%20gradova%202023-24.pdf>

15 [https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2021\\_09\\_100\\_1800.html](https://narodne-novine.nn.hr/clanci/sluzbeni/2021_09_100_1800.html)

all five language skills tested by *Croaticum*'s internal exam, which they took at the end of the semester.

Another contribution from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb was the launch and delivery of a new elective course, offered to graduate students of Croatian studies in the winter semester of the 2018/19 academic year. The name of the course itself, *Croatian as L2 and Service-Learning*,<sup>16</sup> demonstrates that it is the result of thoughtful consideration and recognition of the necessity for a concrete response from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences to the needs of the broader community, and specifically to the language integration of asylees and asylum seekers. As such, and in line with the principles on which this course was based, students, nearing the end of their formal education took on the challenges of fieldwork and applied the knowledge they had acquired to classroom practice. However, before they began the actual implementation, and in accordance with the principles of service-learning, they had to independently design a project and thoroughly devise all its stages. In the first stage of the course, students designed the project *The Course of Literacy in The Latin Script for Asylum Seekers and Asylees*, which in many ways was pioneering and remains unique.

The second stage included planning the project implementation and establishing communication with a social partner, which in this case was AYS. This NGO acted as the intermediary between the faculty and the end users, with their representatives helping to identify and select course participants based on predefined criteria.

The participants had to be asylum seekers or asylees (therefore belonging to a vulnerable group of learners), who are illiterate in the (Croatian) Latin script. The group of participants thus formed was heterogeneous in terms of mother tongues. The most prevalent language

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16 Nives Mikić Preradović, a professor at the Department of Information and Communication Sciences at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb, and a researcher who has extensively studied the method of service-learning in Croatia, coordinating and supervising over 50 student projects of service-learning, explains in her book (2009, p. 7) that service-learning is an educational method allowing students to apply the knowledge and skills acquired in academic courses to develop a project addressing a certain social issue. In other words, it is an innovative pedagogical approach that integrates meaningful work for the common good or social engagement into the curriculum, enabling students to earn ECTS credits through learning derived from active engagement in the community and addressing real social issues.

was Arabic, but three other languages also appeared: Persian or Farsi, Kurdish Sorani, and Tigrinya. The participants came from Iraq, Syria, Afghanistan, Iran, and Eritrea.

Upon mastering (Croatian) Latin script in reading and writing, asylum seekers and asylees were able to participate in Croatian language courses, thereby personally and professionally integrating into Croatian society, which met the requirement of responding to social needs. Moreover, since learning the alphabet is possible only within the context of words and sentences, the participants acquired the basic lexicon at the same time, i.e. the teaching units to a greater or lesser extent included basic oral communication in the Croatian language. All the participants mastered the wording of introductions and greetings, and thus developed the skill of basic oral communication in the Croatian language (Ocvirk et al., 2019).

An additional academic advancement in this field is reflected in the individual initiatives of several experts in the field of Croatian as L2, who highlighted the need to support NGOs in effectively addressing the challenges of language training for refugees in Croatia, as well as raising awareness among relevant institutions about this issue. In this, the same lecturers from *Croaticum* continued, as volunteers, to offer workshops for volunteers from an NGO in the field of foreign language teaching. Additionally, there was a unique research study conducted about the role and self-perception of volunteers in language training for refugees and their specific needs in this demanding role (Podboj and Cvitanušić, 2022).

Based on the data collected through a survey, the authors concluded that the dominant attitude among volunteers<sup>17</sup> teaching Croatian as L2 is that formal qualifications are not necessary for successful language training, although they are welcomed, especially in order to clarify to learners in a simple and methodologically appropriate way (without the use of metalanguage) only those language rules that are necessary for mastering the language at the basic level.<sup>18</sup>

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17 As Croatian is a grammatically gendered language, these authors opted to use the feminine grammatical form *volonterka*, instead of the masculine and form *volonter* (which is also considered to be gender-neutral) precisely to highlight the much greater involvement of female volunteers in this type of volunteer work.

18 The questionnaire was anonymous and was filled out by 28 people, 22 of whom were women,

Furthermore, as was highlighted by participant responses and corroborated by the relevant literature, the challenges in teaching refugees are not just about the potential lack of skills or experience among volunteers, but also about significant organizational issues. Namely, the biggest challenges for successful volunteer engagement when it comes to teaching in organized courses are the short duration of these programmes and lack of adequate teaching materials specifically designed for this target group. Additionally, the respondents also noted a decline in motivation and insufficient time for learning among the refugee population (ibid: 101).

Taking all these points into account, it can be concluded that language training is an interdepartmental issue. Indeed, this awareness already existed 15 years ago, when the Ministry of the Interior ordered the inclusion of asylees in semester courses at *Croaticum* for a period of two years. This topic was also discussed at the UNHCR Round Table *Integration of persons granted protection in the Republic of Croatia: What have we achieved and what are the next steps?* which took place on June 14, 2010, and included a talk by the former head of *Croaticum* titled *Asylees and Learning Croatian*.

A more recent example of this need is the announcement by the Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family, and Social Policy in collaboration with the Croatian Employment Services regarding the distribution of language learning vouchers (beginning in early 2024). This system would enable language learning for third-country nationals in sectors and professions where language proficiency is crucial for effective job performance, as well as for remigrants from abroad and their descendants, and for foreigners under temporary protection. The learning is implemented through short, informal programmes (70 hours). For Croatian as L2 programmes for foreign workers, this system requires employers to partially co-finance the cost of education, depending on the number of employees hired. The system has not yet fully come into effect, so it remains to be seen what impact it will have.

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ranging in age from 18 to 72. Most of the respondents who participated in the research were not formally educated to teach languages. Nine of them stated that they had a formal qualification, of which four completed studies of Croatian language and literature or had a Croatology major, and five of them took majors in other neo-philological subjects. Most of the participants attended some form of a workshop for teaching Croatian as a foreign language to refugees.

From the overview presented above, it can be concluded that the language integration policy for refugees and foreign workers in Croatia is not systematic and fully transparent.

## 4 Conclusion

In the last 20 years, Croatia has transformed from an emigration to an immigration destination, facing at all levels a chaotic approach to both the language assessment and language training of the immigrant population. When it comes to the legal framework for regulating permanent residence in the Republic of Croatia, which prescribes the passing of an exam at the level B1 of knowledge of the Croatian language, from one look at the unreviewed list of as many as 76 institutions that (allegedly) conduct this exam, it can be concluded that there is not a systematic nor professional nor a transparent approach to this important praxis. Each organizational unit decides completely autonomously about the protocol, prices and content of their Croatian language exams (and an example of the exam is only available for viewing on the websites of two of the 76 institutions), which raises the issue of a lack of uniform criteria and conditions for obtaining a certificate of language proficiency at the legally prescribed level.

The current circumstances of the linguistic integration of refugees are not much more encouraging. Despite the existence of a rather detailed legal framework, a clear and transparent approach to this topic is still missing, and the necessary interdepartmental and interinstitutional cooperation in which all actors would contribute to responding to such an important social need has not been established.

The predominant pioneering initiatives are made by organizations that are dedicated to refugee integration in general, such as the Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS), Centre for Peace Studies (CMS), and Are You Syrius (AYS), with certain activities done and promoted by *Croaticum*.

Language integration of foreign workers coming from more distant linguistic and cultural backgrounds was not addressed by institutions until the recent introduction of language learning vouchers. We believe that a legal obligation on employers to ensure language training for their employees would represent a significant step forward in terms of

foreign workers' successful integration into Croatian society, and a richer cultural exchange within the community. Moreover, it is known that non-native speakers who have mastered at least a basic level of communication competence in the language of the country they have moved to can advocate for themselves and their interests more confidently.

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## Jezikovna integracija prisilnih in ekonomskih migrantov na Hrvaškem

Članek prinaša pregled jezikovne integracije t. i. novih migrantov (begunci, prosilci za azil in tuji delavci). Poseben poudarek je namenjen dosedanji praksi in prihodnjim potrebam poučevanja in testiranja hrvaškega jezika kot drugega in tujega jezika v povezavi s prisilnimi migracijami (begunci, prosilci za azil in osebe s priznanim azilom) ter z naraščajočim obsegom ekonomskih migracij, s katerimi se trenutno sooča Hrvaška. Opisane so vloge državnih in izobraževalnih institucij ter politike in pravni okvir (jezikovne) integracije ranljivih skupin učencev.

**Ključne besede:** hrvaščina kot drugi in tuji jezik, prisilne in ekonomske migracije, jezikovna integracija